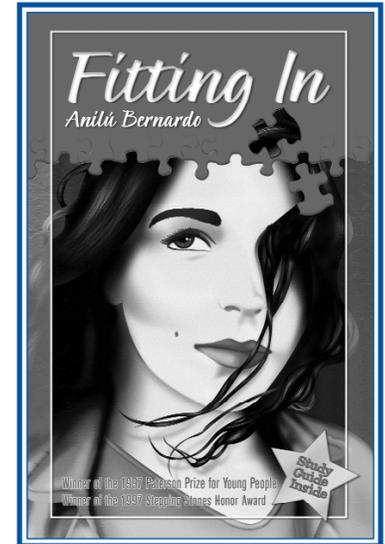


# *Fitting In*

by Anilú Bernardo

## *Themes*

- Cultural acceptance
- Assimilation
- Coming-of-age



*Fitting In* consists of five separate but complementary stories highlighting the Cuban immigrant experience of young female adolescents living in Miami, Florida. The stories can stand on their own, but as a collection of stories, the book offers a more comprehensive understanding of two central themes: cultural acceptance and assimilation. The colorful characters of these stories overcome their language barriers and challenges by cultivating their own self-confidence. They learn how to “fit in” without losing their identity or integrity.

## CRITIC'S PRAISE

Recipient of a 1997 Skipping Stones Award and The Paterson Prize for Young Adult Literature

“This is a good choice.”

—*School Library Journal*

“The stories do speak with a lively and authentic accent about the angst of bicultural female adolescence.”

—*Kirkus Review*

## TEACHING OVERVIEW

*Fitting In* is a series of stories that provides a culturally rich context for learning more about Cuba in general, and about Cubans living in the United States in particular. The book offers glimpses of what it is like to be a female teenager complete with the themes of friendship, boys, clothes, and acceptance amongst peers. On a broader scale, the stories lend themselves to an exploration of English as a Second language issues as well as cultural assimilation issues.

Although the stories are written with 13–15 year old females as the main characters, this book is suitable for similar aged boys too as they will relate to the challenges and issues that these girl characters face.

Since each story is not dependent on the other stories, the teacher can choose to work with this book as a whole or not. In order to facilitate this option and because each story offers unique learning applications, this Teacher Guide is organized into five miniature sub-guides by story title. Each sub-guide contains a story summary, comprehension strategies with specific pre-during and post reading activities, and story specific glossaries. Suggestions for connecting to the internet/technology, ideas for other follow-up/extension activities, and additional readings or other books encompass the broader themes and book as a whole.

For the teacher's convenience and lesson plan accountability, the Language Art activities in this guide satisfy generalized content standards for the following knowledge skill areas: listening, speaking, reading, writing and viewing.



## COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

Under each story title, the teacher will find Before, During and After Comprehension strategies contain activities for improving listening/speaking, reading, writing and viewing skills. (Note: For the purposes of this study guide, viewing skills refer to the student's ability to understand and interpret visual images, messages, and meanings.) Where appropriate, the skill set addressed by each of the activities is noted in parenthesis.

Before each of the following stories, introduce the story's corresponding Glossary of Spanish Terms, which appears at the end of each section. Make copies available for each student and present the vocabulary, pronunciations of terms, and names they will encounter in story (**Reading:** word identification, vocabulary development). Highlight use of accents, note similarities and differences of spelling and sounds (**Writing:** influence of other cultures/languages on English).

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### I. "Grandma Was Never Young" (pp. 9–36)

**STORY SUMMARY:** Young teen-age Sari is often embarrassed by her Spanish-speaking grandmother. She wishes her grandmother could speak more English because she ends up in uncomfortable translating situations like at the pharmacy or during Mrs. Perry's dress fittings. Sari tries to avoid her friends when she is out and about with her grandmother. Her grandmother meanwhile is truly appreciative of Sari's language assistance and decides to surprise Sari with a hand-sewn dress for the school dance. Sari hopes to be asked to the dance by a certain boy and confides in her grandmother. Sensing an opportunity to connect, Sari's grandmother presents the dress she secretly made with joy. Unfortunately, the dress is not up to date with the styles for teen-age girls and Sari hates it. Although Sari's reaction is hurtful, the situation triggers an unexpected but understood confession from her grandmother when she was Sari's age. Sari recognizes that her grandmother was once young and just like her.

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## COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

### BEFORE READING

Invite students to study the front cover and title of the book and make predictions about the story based on their observations (**Reading:** prediction, prior knowledge). Have students articulate what the illustration reveals about Sari's character, her grandmother's character and the story's plot (**Viewing:** interpretation; how illustration extends meaning of story).

Explore the topic of being embarrassed. In a large group, create a semantic list of synonyms for the word in any of its forms (i.e. embarrassment, embarrassing, embarrassed, etc.) Ask students to write a short anecdote of a time or situation

where they felt embarrassed without using the word in any of its forms. Encourage them to highlight what exactly made them feel that way and why as well as how it felt for them at the time (**Writing:** to express, to describe and/or narrate).

As an extension and/or alternative, have students share their anecdotes out loud as mini-oral presentations (**Listening / Speaking:** connecting his/her own experiences with experiences of others through speaking and listening). Ask students to be aware as they read and to notice examples in the story where Sari feels embarrassment.

### AS READING PROGRESSES

Assign the story, "Grandma Was Never Young" during a silent reading block for two different sessions and/or incorporate into assigned reading at home (**Reading:** fluency, reading silently). Have students refer to glossary regularly as they encounter Spanish vocabulary words (**Reading:** vocabulary development).

Pose your own or the following questions to students designed to improve or assess reading comprehension as story progresses (**Reading:** comprehension). The questions can serve as prompts for in-class large group or small group discussions (**Listening / Speaking:** listening/speaking/appreciation).

and/or as take home written assignments (**Writing:** writing for a variety of purposes; to express, to discover, to record, to develop, to reflect on ideas, and/or to problem

solve). Sample comprehension and discussion questions might include:

**Session I:** Assign (pp. 9-23)

1. What kind of work does Sari's Grandma do part-time? Do you have grandparents who live with you at home? If so, do they work part-time to help at home?
2. How does Sari help her Grandma during the fitting for Mrs. Perry? Why does Sari find the situation embarrassing?
3. What is Spanglish? When do Isabel, Glori and Sari speak it? What is their unspoken agreement? What Spanglish do you know? List some examples.
4. Sari and her friends have two major concerns regarding the

school dance: the dresses they will wear and whether the boys will ask them to go or not. Do boys and girls at your school have similar kinds of concerns in regards to school dances? Describe how your situation is similar and/or different.

5. Why did Sari's Grandma need to go to the drugstore? What was Sari's role and why was it embarrassing for her? Would you be embarrassed? Why or why not?

**Session II:** Assign (pp. 24-36)

1. On pg. 25 Sari's mom says, "You know your Grandma is always thinking of ways to help you. She devotes her life to you." List some examples to support this claim. Do you think Sari appreciates her Grandma's gestures of kindness? Why or why not?

2. Why did Sari dread the moment of receiving the dress from her Grandma?
3. On pg. 26 Sari says, "Grandma has never been young." What do you think Sari means by that?
4. What does Sari think about the dress? Would you have handled the situation differently? Explain your response.
5. Although hurt by Sari's reaction to the dress, Sari's Grandma decides to share a growing up story about her Aunt Lucy. As a result, Sari's perception of her Grandma changes. Why?
6. What do Sari and her Grandma ultimately do to the dress?
7. Who in your family do you think you will most be like when you get older?

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## AFTER READING

### Viewing Activities:

1. Note the illustration on pg. 27. How does the illustrator's use of lines and shadowing extend our understanding of Grandma's character? (**Viewing:** interpretation)
2. On pg. 30 it says, "Grandma's face showed the deep hurt Sari had caused." Make your own illustration of an older face using details to reveal a face that feels or expresses hurt (**Viewing:** producing visuals to extend meaning).

### Writing Activities:

1. Ask students to review and read the completed bilingual

- school rhyme/poem from the story (See Glossary #1). Encourage students to compose a humorous school rhyme, poem, and/or short story of their own incorporating all of the English and Spanish words from the five couplets in the poem (**Writing:** purposes; to entertain).
2. Encourage students to be thoughtful and appreciative of family and or family relationships. Have them write a short thank you note, letter or e-mail to at least one of their living relatives for something they are thankful for (**Writing:** practical usage; connections).

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## II. "Hurricane Friends" (pp. 37-86)

**STORY SUMMARY:** Thirteen-year old Clari hears the pending news about a hurricane coming their way to Miami and races home from the library. She decides to shave at least five minutes off her way home by taking a short cut over her neighbor's sagging fence. It is not the first time Clari has cut through Mrs. Murphy's yard. But this time the old grouch marches over and complains to Clari's father. Clari has to translate for him and ends up getting grounded for the weekend. It seems Mrs. Murphy always has something to complain

about and even scolds Clari's father about his poor English.

Although the Martinez family agrees that Mrs. Murphy seems like a bothersome neighbor, they share concern about her safety and well-being with a hurricane on its way. Clari learns valuable tips from her parents on how to prepare for a hurricane and realizes that their water and electricity could be affected. The hurricane comes and causes damage to the Martinez' house, but also initiates the beginning of a special friendship with Mrs. Murphy.

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## COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

### BEFORE READING

Initiate a discussion on the topic of hurricanes. Find out if any of your students have experienced one and elicit any prior knowledge students may have about hurricanes

(**Reading:** comprehension, prior knowledge and experi-

ence). Have students conduct research using a variety of resources (i.e. electronic texts, experts, print resources, etc.) on the topic of hurricanes (**Reading:** inquiry/research).

## AS READING PROGRESSES

Assign the story, “Hurricane Friends” during a silent reading block for three different sessions and/or incorporate into assigned reading at home (**Reading:** fluency, reading silently). Have students refer to glossary regularly as they encounter Spanish vocabulary words (**Reading:** vocabulary development).

Pose your own or the following questions to students designed to improve or assess reading comprehension as story progresses (**Reading:** comprehension). The questions can serve as prompts for in-class large group or small group discussions (**Listening / Speaking:** listening/speaking/appreciation) and/or as take home written assignments (**Writing:** writing for a variety of purposes; to express, to discover, to record, to develop, to reflect on ideas, and/or to problem solve). Sample comprehension and discussion questions might include:

### Session I: Assign (pp. 37-54)

1. Why does Clari distract her father when she races through the front door of the house after cutting over Mrs. Murphy’s fence?
2. On pg. 40 Clari’s father says, “So this is the hurricane that was heading this way.” What is the figurative meaning of his statement? What is the literal meaning of his statement?
3. What rationale does Clari use to explain her position about taking the shortcut home? Is she convincing? Why or why not? What would you add to strengthen her position?
4. Why does Clari think Mrs. Murphy is a grouch? Do you agree? Explain.
5. How do Clari’s parents prepare for the hurricane? List specific things they think about and do as part of the preparations.
6. What other things does Mrs. Murphy complain about? Do you think Mrs. Murphy is a mean person? Why or why not?

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## AFTER READING

### Viewing Activities:

1. On pg. 42 and 43 the author describes the Cuban bean soup or spicy picadillo as having a delicious aroma as it simmers on the stove. Make an illustration that depicts a scene where the viewer senses either the soup’s spicy taste and/or its delicious aroma (**Viewing:** representing, production to extend meaning).
2. Note the illustration on pg. 61. What does this illustration reveal about Clari’s character? (**Viewing:** interpretation, extension of text’s meaning) Why do you think the illustrator chose this illustration as the only one in the story? (**Viewing:** interpretation, evaluation of illustrator’s choice)
3. On pg. 70, the author uses colorful language to describe how the wind beats at the house: It sounded like a locomotive coming at them at great speed; The cement tiles on the roof clattered like a thousand castanets. On pg. 75, the author describes the grapefruit branches that poked

### Session II: Assign (pp. 55-69)

1. What does it mean for an area to be under hurricane watch?
2. How does the “Metro-Dade Transportation” van assist people during hurricane danger? What are the rules about pets and how does that affect Mrs. Murphy?
3. Do you think Clari’s motivation to help Mrs. Murphy with her cat Midnight is based more on a change in feeling for Mrs. Murphy or on concerns for the well-being of Midnight? Describe your position.
4. Both Clari’s mother and father tease each other about becoming softies for Mrs. Murphy. What do they do and what do they mean? What makes Clari’s father announce that she is a softie too?

### Session III: Assign (pp. 70-86)

1. What news about the hurricane made it frightening? Be specific.
2. How do you think a hurricane is perceived from an animal’s point of view? Describe your response in terms of what it might feel like to be a bird or cat like Midnight or Kiki inside during a hurricane.
3. What happened to the bathroom window? Why is this incident an important part of the story’s plot?
4. On pg. 78 it says, “Clari couldn’t believe the force of the wind.” What kinds of damage did she find unbelievable?
5. What two things does Mrs. Murphy immediately notice upon returning home? What does Clari do to Mrs. Murphy that annoys her mother and upsets her father? How does she make up for her meanness to Mrs. Murphy?
6. In what ways does Mrs. Murphy show her appreciation for the Martinez family? List at least three examples.
7. How does the issue of the fence ultimately get resolved?

through the broken bathroom: They looked like skinny arms reaching into the house to get away from the storm. Choose one of these descriptions and make your own illustration (**Viewing:** representing, production).

### Writing Activities:

1. Have students imagine a hurricane-damaged area and explain in writing what it would like immediately after the storm (**Writing:** purposes, to explain).
2. Do a mini-lesson on examples of metaphor and figurative language. Ask students to describe what a hurricane might feel or sound like using metaphors or figurative language (**Writing:** purposes, using literary devices).
3. Have students create and write their own newscast warning announcement of an approaching hurricane. Encourage use of weather terminology and the incorporation of safety precautions (**Writing:** research, reporting).

### III. “A Do-It-Yourself Project” (pp.87-116)

**STORY SUMMARY:** In all of her thirteen years, Mari had never heard of the word “diorama” before. She panicked when her teacher Mrs. Graham announced that all students needed to make a diorama showing the “food chain of life” in Biscayne Bay. Mari knew better than to ask Mrs. Graham, but it appeared many other students did not know what the word meant either. After learning that her mother had no idea, Mari searched in their only dictionary at home with no luck. She wished her father still lived with them because

she knew he would have known. Frustrated and angry, Mari learns that she has to figure out another way on her own.

At the school library, she seeks help from the school librarian Mrs. Frank. Mrs. Frank becomes an on-going source of encouragement and ideas as Mari struggles with a limited budget and no outside assistance. Mari discovers that using her own head and hands can be rewarding in more ways than one.

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#### COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

##### BEFORE READING

Write the word “diorama” on the board. Ask students to share in their own words what they think the word means (**Reading:** comprehension, prior knowledge). Based on group input, ensure the class understands the word diorama and assign a diorama project that students work on outside of class while assigned to this story (anticipate in advance

for the collection of extra materials via a note home so that all students have access to starting materials beforehand). Diorama ideas might include: food chains\* that pertain to your area, climate comparisons of Miami to your area, sea life in general, a scene from the story, etc.

\*See After Reading Viewing Activities #1

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##### AS READING PROGRESSES

Assign the story, “A Do-It-Yourself Project” during a silent reading block for two different sessions and/or incorporate into assigned reading at home (**Reading:** fluency, reading silently). Have students refer to glossary regularly as they encounter Spanish or Seminole vocabulary words (**Reading:** vocabulary development).

Pose your own or the following questions to students designed to improve or assess reading comprehension as story progresses (**Reading:** comprehension). The questions can serve as prompts for in-class large group or small group discussions (**Listening / Speaking:** listening/speaking/appreciation) and/or as take home written assignments (**Writing:** writing for a variety of purposes; to express, to discover, to record, to develop, to reflect on ideas, and/or to problem solve). Sample comprehension and discussion questions might include:

**Session I:** Assign (pp. 87–101)

1. Write your own definition of the word diorama.
2. Have you ever had a teacher like Mrs. Graham where you were expected to either know what the teacher meant or you had to find out on your own? If yes, did you like this characteristic of your teacher? Why or why not (without mentioning any names)? If not, imagine that Mrs. Graham is your teacher. Do you like this characteristic of Mrs. Graham?

3. Why did Mari think Mrs. Graham was a strange woman? Do you think Mrs. Graham is a strange woman? Why or why not?
4. What kind of dictionary did Mari have at home? Why was it not useful? How did Mari’s mother feel about the dictionary? Why did that make Mari feel guilty?
5. Why did Mari believe that her papá would know how to help her? Why does she believe that her mamá just didn’t have the answers?
6. How does Mari resolve to find out on her own?
7. What does Mrs. Frank do to help Mari? Be specific.

**Session II:** Assign (pp. 102–116)

1. How does Mari’s diorama begin to take shape? How has making a diorama become fun for Mari?
2. Why is Mari devastated after overhearing other students talk about their own projects? What is the interpretation of “homemade” as used on pg. 103 and 104?
3. Do you think there should be a limitation on parental help? Why or why not?
4. What materials does Mari use in her diorama?
5. How does Mrs. Frank reassure Mari? What is Mrs. Frank’s main message to Mari throughout the entire process?
6. What was Mari’s big realization? How do you think it will impact her future?

## AFTER READING

### Viewing Activities:

1. Discuss the concept of food chains in different eco-systems (i.e. the desert, the ocean, the high plains, etc). Have students select a particular food chain found in nature and make their own visual (i.e. poster, outline, graphic organizer, feature map, etc...) representing the summary of their ideas (**Viewing:** representing, production).
2. Have students locate Biscayne Bay using a map or atlas. Elicit their ideas on what they think are important aspects about the area in general, and in its close proximity to Miami in particular (**Viewing:** interpreting from maps, charts and/or graphics). Encourage students to find out specific information about Biscayne Bay using a variety of available resources (**Reading:** inquiry/research).
3. On pg. 94, Mari's mother wonders about the meaning of food chains. She literally says, "She wants you to make a chain out of vegetables?" Make your own illustration of a "chain of vegetables" (**Viewing:** interpretation).
4. Note the illustration on pg. 115. Why do you think the illustrator chose this as the only illustration to capture the story? (**Viewing:** illustrator's choice, representing text's meaning) How does this illustration extend the meaning of the word diorama? (**Viewing:** interpretation, extending meaning of text)

### Writing Activities:

1. The story highlights the use of dictionaries for finding information and their limitations. Generate a discussion about types of dictionaries and their uses (i.e. picture dictionaries, language dictionaries, technical dictionaries, etc.). Purposely, write on the board several words that

most likely are not known by your students. Have them locate the meanings and write out their findings (**Reading:** word identification).

As an extension, have students pair up and challenge each other to find what they believe are to be strange words and write out their findings. Encourage them to do at least 4 or 5 words apiece and turn in their definitions. Compile the lists of words and create a spelling activity (**Writing:** spelling).

2. Have students break into groups of 4-6 apiece and play the game "Dictionary." All participants will need something to write with and several strips of paper. One person goes first and looks up a word, then checks with group to make sure no one knows the word's meaning. When an unknown word is agreed upon and found, all participants make up their own definition and write it on a piece of paper while the person with the dictionary writes the dictionary definition on a piece of paper. Then everyone hands in their definition to the dictionary person (make sure students write their names by or near their definitions). The dictionary person then proceeds to read out the definitions. Participants listen and then vote out loud and individually for what they believe is the real definition.

Scoring: The dictionary person allots a point to each person who guesses the real definition, and dedicates a point to the author of a definition that obtained a vote from one of the other participants. If no one guesses the real definition, the dictionary person gets a point. After each person in the group has a turn as the dictionary person, the game is finished. Winner is the one with the most points (**Listening / Speaking:** purposes; **Reading:** word identification; **Writing:** purposes, persuasion).

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## IV. "Multiple Choices" (pp. 117-152)

**STORY SUMMARY:** Fourteen-year-old Chari gets called to the principal's office to handle a very delicate assignment. Although Chari speaks Spanish and English, her task is to serve as a friend and an assistant to Yvette, who has recently arrived to the United States from Haiti. It is a challenge at first since Yvette speaks only Creole and minimal English. But Chari enjoys her permanent hall pass privilege and dedicates her energies to easing Yvette's transition.

The more time Chari spends with Yvette, the less time she

spends with her other girlfriends who are part of the popular crowd. Chari feels torn between her duties and her desires to belong with the "in" crowd because it took along time to finally feel accepted as one of them. When Chari says "yes" to an invitation to Yvette's 15<sup>th</sup> birthday, she learns she has also been invited to big beach party, which sounds like a lot more fun. Chari confronts her conflict and discovers her own set of values in the process. She makes a choice that she doesn't regret.

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## COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

### BEFORE READING

Explore the theme of making choices with your students. Talk about the kinds of choices that people make from every day little choices (i.e. like what to wear or what to eat for breakfast) to bigger life choices (i.e. like who we choose for friends or what we want to do in the future).

Ask students to answer and reflect on their personal experience of making choices. Encourage students to share how they go about making their own choices and how they handle personal conflicts (**Listening / Speaking:** purposes, to enjoy and appreciate input of others).

Have them respond in writing (**Writing:** purposes, to express and discover) and/or orally (**Listening / Speaking:** connecting his/her experiences to others) to the following questions:

1. What difficult choice have you had to make? Do you feel now that you made the right decision?
2. Have you ever made a choice that surprised everyone you knew?
3. You have an important exam tomorrow, but one of your

best friends stops by and begs you to go to the movies. What choice will you make and why?

4. If you had to choose between blindness and deafness, which would you choose? Why?

Invite students to study the title “Multiple Choices.” Elicit responses on what they think the title means. Have them make predictions about the story’s content (**Reading:** prediction, prior knowledge).

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## AS READING PROGRESSES

Assign the story, “Multiple Choices” during a silent reading block for two different sessions and/or incorporate into assigned reading at home (**Reading:** fluency, reading silently). Have students refer to glossary regularly as they encounter Spanish or French Creole vocabulary words (**Reading:** vocabulary development).

Pose your own or the following questions to students designed to improve or assess reading comprehension as story progresses (**Reading:** comprehension). The questions can serve as prompts for in-class large group or small group discussions (**Listening / Speaking:** listening/speaking/ appreciation) and/or as take home written assignments (**Writing:** writing for a variety of purposes; to express, to discover, to record, to develop, to reflect on ideas, and/or to problem solve). Sample comprehension and discussion questions might include:

### Session I: Assign (pp. 117-134)

1. Chari did not know whether to be proud or scared when she was called to the principal’s office. What did she believe were the two main reasons people were called to the principals’ office. Do you agree? Why or why not?
2. Why did Mrs. Hill call Chari to her office? How did Chari feel with what the principal had to say?
3. On pg. 123, Chari remembers how it felt when she first arrived from Cuba. “It had been painful to swim in a sea of strangers and not to understand what was being said.” Have you had a similar experience? If yes, describe. If not, imagine yourself in that kind of situation and describe what you think you would feel.
4. How did Chari and Yvette communicate with each other at first? What did Chari think to do to make the understanding of English easier for Yvette? What did Chari observe about Yvette’s English?
5. On pg. 128, Chari was afraid that Yvette would read her

true feelings. What were her true feelings? How would you describe the kind of choice Chari is making for herself?

6. How does Chari feel about Mike? What kinds of things does she physically feel when her friends tease her about him?
7. Why does Chari’s face turn to horror when she learns about the specifics of the beach party? How does Chari’s friend Lindy think Chari should handle the dilemma? Do you agree with Lindy? Why or why not?

### Session II: Assign (pp. 135–152)

1. What happens at the softball practice game? Why does Yvette leave before the game ends? What would you have done?
2. Why did Chari fear backing out of the party more than telling Yvette about not making the team?
3. Chari knew she had to tell Yvette why she did not make the team. What did she end up telling Yvette? Do you think it is hard to give someone bad news? Why or why not?
4. Why do you think Cuban girls usually don’t play sports? How does this add to your understanding of Cuban culture?
5. On pg. 146, Chari feels her ears burn with shame when Yvette misunderstands her early giving of the birthday present as a kind act versus a selfish act. Why does Chari reflect on the true meaning of her name? Have you ever been really ashamed of something that you did? If yes, what kind of reflections did you have about yourself afterward? If not, imagine how you might feel about yourself and describe what you would most likely reflect about.
6. What does Chari ultimately end up choosing to do? Why do you think it was a complex choice for her?
7. What do you think will happen to Yvette and Chari’s friendship? Do you think Yvette will become one of the popular girls or that Chari will spend more time with Yvette and less time with the popular girls? Explain your response.

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## AFTER READING

### Viewing Activities:

1. Note the illustration on pg. 143. Who is who? What does this illustration reveal about Chari’s and Yvette’s friendship? (**Viewing:** interpretation, extension of text’s meaning) Why do you think the illustrator chose this illustration as the only one in the story?

- (**Viewing:** interpretation, evaluation of illustrator’s choice)
2. Chari gives Yvette a bright blue t-shirt. The summery design on front reminded Chari of sunny beach day. Design your own illustration of a bright blue t-shirt that

would make your viewer think of a sunny beach day (**Viewing**: representing, producing visuals to complement meanings).

### Writing/Reading Activities:

1. Have students look back through the story and find examples that inform the reader about Cuban culture and write/record their findings (**Reading / Writing**: culture, determining distinctive characteristics of culture).
2. At Chari's school there is a Leadership Program. Describe via a graphic organizer or short narrative what

- you think should make up a Leadership Program. Think about qualifying characteristics besides outstanding grades and behavior as well as the kinds of student privileges that might be possible (**Writing**: purposes, generating/organizing ideas, narrative).
3. Imagine that Chari decided to go the beach party instead of Yvette's birthday party. Have students write a letter to Yvette, as if they were Chari in the first person, describing why they cannot make the birthday party (**Writing**: purposes; expressing, explaining, letter writing, connecting).

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## V. "American Girls" (pp. 153–200)

**STORY SUMMARY:** Tere hates it when Brian and the other boys make fun of how her English sounds in class. Her two good friends, Alicia and Mari, are also Cuban, but their English is better and they hardly have a Spanish accent so they don't ever get picked on. With a school carnival coming up, the three of them decide to volunteer for the Bake Sale booth, but Tere is so afraid to speak up that she doesn't raise her hand in time. Instead she ends up on the Pie-in-the-Face booth with two other girls who have never been that friendly to her, especially Mary Beth.

Brian and the boys get out of hand at The Pie-in-the-Face booth, and the crowd gets wild. After Mary Beth, Kelly, and Tere get called to the principal's office, Tere is asked to remain behind. Mary Beth assumes Tere has tattled on the specific boys who were given detention. The five boys create a mud-slide trap for Tere, but Mary Beth ends up falling in the trap. Tere understands the feelings of humiliation and decides to help her out of the ditch. A mutual trust and friendship begins to unfold as they learn they are not so different from each other.

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### COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

#### BEFORE READING

Ask students to reflect on whether they have ever felt picked on in school for being different and to share their insights or experiences with the class (**Listening / Speaking**: culture, connecting his/her own experiences/insights/ideas with those of others).

On the board, write the phrase that the main character Tere expresses on pg. 193, "It is easy to pick on someone

different." Ask students whether they agree or not and to explain their response in writing (**Writing**: to express, to discover).

Encourage students to keep a journal while they read, and to note examples of when Tere feels picked upon (**Reading**: comprehension, adjusting purposes for reading) and (**Writing**: purposes, journals).

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#### AS READING PROGRESSES

Assign the story, "American Girls" during a silent reading block for three different sessions and/or incorporate into assigned reading at home (**Reading**: fluency, reading silently). Have students refer to glossary regularly as they encounter Spanish or Altered English vocabulary words (**Reading**: vocabulary development).

Pose your own or the following questions to students designed to improve or assess reading comprehension as story progresses (**Reading**: comprehension). The questions can serve as prompts for in-class large group or small group discussions (**Listening / Speaking**: listening/speaking/appreciation) and/or as take home written assignments (**Writing**: writing for a variety of purposes; to express, to discover, to record, to develop, to reflect on ideas, and/or to

problem solve). Sample comprehension and discussion questions might include:

**Session I:** Assign (pp. 153–168)

1. Although Tere knows the answers in her geography class, why does she fear being called upon? Would you feel the same way? Why or why not?
2. How do the group of boys led by Brian tease Tere? What does her friend Alicia do to try to make Tere feel better?
3. Why do Tere, Alicia and Mari think the Bake Sale booth would be the most fun to work at during the school carnival? Which booths do they wish to avoid? Why?
4. Why does Tere fret during Math class? Why doesn't Tere feel good about having the right answers?

5. When do Tere and Alicia usually speak in Spanish? How does Mary Beth respond when she could hear the two of them talking in Spanish? What do you believe Mary Beth thinks they are talking about?
6. Why is taking a shower in the locker room seem to bother everyone? What is the shower policy at your school?
7. What have you learned so far about Mary Beth's character? Use specific examples to support your observations.

**Session II:** Assign (pp. 168–184)

1. In Mr. Tabor's English class, he expects his students to "break out of themselves." What does he mean by that? How does Tere feel about his expectation?
2. Why doesn't Tere raise her hand in time for the Bake Sale booth? What happens as a consequence?
3. What kind of person is Tere's mother? How does she respond to Tere's pleas to stay home instead of attending the school carnival?
4. What does Mary Beth call Tere when Tere arrives into the booth? How does Tere answer back? How would you have answered back?
5. Why do you think Mary Beth likes getting hit with the pies? Do you think it would be fun to get hit with the pies? Why or why not?
6. What happens at the booth when the boys take their turns at throwing the pies?

- What does Tere do when the crowd gets wild?
7. Why does everyone but Tere's two close friends assume she told on the boys? What did she actually end up telling the principal Mrs. Ferro? What would you have told the principal if you were Tere?

**Session III:** Assign (pp. 184–200)

1. What does Tere notice about the footbridge she is about to cross? Why doesn't she warn Mary Beth?
2. Why doesn't Tere just walk away after Mary Beth slipped into the ditch? What does this reveal about Tere's character and personality?
3. Mary Beth acknowledges that Tere isn't really all that different from her or others. Why do you think Mary Beth comes to that conclusion?
4. How does Mary Beth feel when Tere speaks with her Cuban friends in Spanish around her? What is Tere's explanation to Mary Beth?
5. Why do Mary Beth and Tere initially not trust each other? Why do you think trust is important in a friendship?
6. Tere and Mary Beth decide to help each other in what ways? Be specific.
7. What does it mean to be an American Girl? Why is the name "The American Girls" appropriate for the basketball team that Mary Beth and Tere want to form?

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**AFTER READING**

**Viewing Activities:**

1. Note the illustration on pg. 194. Why do you think the illustrator decided on this scene for the story's only illustration? What details in this illustration reveal a change in Mary Beth's character? (**Viewing:** interpretation, extension of text's meaning)
2. Make your own illustration of the Pie-in-the-Face booth before, during or after the chaos (**Viewing:** production, complement meaning of text).

**Writing Activities:**

1. Imagine that you are in Mr. Tabor's class and have to sign up for a booth at your school carnival. Select one of his booths (Fortune Telling Bake Sale, Pie-in-the-Face, Dunk Tank, Ring Toss...) or create one of your own. "Break out of yourself" on paper, see pg. 169. Using Mr. Tabor's rules, write why you want to volunteer for your booth. Include in your description what talents you have that would be helpful for the job of working at your specific booth (**Writing:** purposes, to request and/or describe).
2. In Tere's geography class, the students were learning about Greece. Have students make a graphic organizer on what they already know about Greece using what they read in

the story and their own knowledge. (**Writing:** graphic organizer using prior knowledge). Encourage them to expand upon their knowledge about Greece using on-line sources, the library, periodicals, etc. With a different colored pen or pencil, have them add their new findings to their graphic organizer. Have them cite their sources. (**Writing:** inquiry/research/bridging known to unknown).

**Reading Activities:**

1. On pg. 195, there are several places, which reveal some of Tere's pronunciation difficulties with the "th" sound. Have students read the page carefully and play detective and find at least five different examples. (**Reading:** culture, common characteristics). Ask students to list the words they find and analyze their mistakes (i.e. in what part of the word does the "th" sound occur and what letter/sound does Tere use instead of the "th" sound). Encourage them to refer to the story's glossary for assistance.
2. As a large group, call on volunteers to reread aloud pp. 187–188 regarding the footbridge trap made by the boys. Have students describe the mental images that come to mind from the description these pages evoke (**Reading:** comprehension, describing mental images).

## OTHER FOLLOW-UP/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Encourage students to do their own research on Cuba using the above web-sites, library resources, periodicals, newspapers, guest speakers, etc. (**Reading:** inquiry, research).
2. Have students use their findings to do a compare and contrast project of similarities and differences between Cuban culture and United States culture using either an outline format, listing format or Venn Diagram (**Writing:** inquiry, research, summarization and organization of findings).
3. Ask students to skim all five stories in the book (**Reading:** fluency, adjusting rate of reading for specific purposes) and find examples of language, foods, or other characteristics that inform the reader about aspects of Cuban culture (**Reading:** culture, cultural characteristics through wide reading). Require that students note specific page numbers of their examples (**Writing:** purposes, to record) and have them categorize their findings into specific sub-headings (**Writing:** organizing information in useful ways). Sample sub-heading or categories might include: foods, language, geography references, character names, etc. (Similar to “Multiple Choices” Writing/Reading Activity #1, but more expansive).

### GLOSSARY #1: Grandma Was Never Young

#### I. VOCABULARIO/VOCABULARY (boh-cah-boo-lah'ree-oh)

Aloo	hello
Mi amor (mee ah'mohr)	My darling, my love
Mi vida (mee vee-dah)	My life, common term for someone you love
Oigo ('oh-ee-goh)	hello, I hear
Perrito (peh-ree-toh)	puppy, little dog
Spanglish	mixture of Spanish and English

#### II. NOMBRES/NAMES ('nohm-brehs)

Mrs. Zaenz (Grandma)	Mrs. López
Sari	Isabel
Yoolie (Julie)	Glori
Carlos	Yeem (Jim)

#### III. POEMA/POEM (poh-'ehm-ah)

Pollito—Chicken; Gallina—Hen;	Perro—Dog; Gato—Cat;
Lápiz—Pencil; Pluma—Pen;	Sol—Sun; Paloma—Dove;
Miel—Honey; Oso—Bear;	Hogar—Home; Amor—Love;
Manzana—Apple; Pera—Pear;	Caballo—Horse; Vaca—Cow;
Zapato—Shoe; Gorra—Hat;	This rhyme has ended, Ahora—Now.

### GLOSSARY #2: Hurricane Friends

#### I. VOCABULARIO/VOCABULARY (boh-cah-boo-lah'ree-oh)

Mi hija (mee ee-hah)	My daughter
Picadillo (pee-cah-dee-oh)	Spicy Cuban Bean Soup with Ground Beef
Si, mi hija (see mee ee-hah)	Yes, my daughter

#### II. NOMBRES/NAMES ( 'nohm-brehs)

Clari (Clarita)
Papi (Mr. Martinez)
Mami

### GLOSSARY #3: A Do-It-Yourself Project

#### I. VOCABULARIO/VOCABULARY (boh-cah-boo-lah'ree-oh)

Bistec (beez-tehk)	Thin Cuban Beefsteak
Chickee hut	Palm-frond house used by the Native American Tribe of South Florida
Mamá (mah-mah)	Mother, mom, mama
Mi amor (mee ah'mohr)	My love, darling
Papá (pah-pah)	Father, dad, papa
Seminoles	Native American Tribe of South Florida (i.e. Everglades)

#### II. NOMBRES/NAMES ( 'nohm-brehs)

Mari Espina
Erica
Ana

## GLOSSARY #4: Multiple Choices

### I. VOCABULARIO/VOCABULARY (boh-cah-boo-lah'ree-oh)

Caridad  
(cah-ree-dahd)

Charity

### II. FRENCH CREOLE VOCABULARY

Banane	Plantain
Cherie	Darling
Griot	Fried Pork Chunks
Manman	Mother, mom
Merci	Thank you
Non?	No?
Papa	Father, papa
Riz et Pois	Red Kidney Beans and Rice

### III. NOMBRES/NAMES ( 'nohm-brehs)

Chari Lopez	Pierre family:
Isabel	Yvette
Cristi	Jean
	Claude

## GLOSSARY #5: American Girls

### I. VOCABULARIO/VOCABULARY (boh-cah-boo-lah'ree-oh)

Atena (ah-teh-nah)	Athens
Mar Mediterraneo (Mahr Meh-dee-teh-rah-neh-oh)	Mediterranean Sea

### II. NOMBRES/NAMES ( 'nohm-brehs)

Tere  
Alicia  
Mari  
Mrs. Ferro



## About the Author

Though **Anilú Bernardo** first wrote poetry, she now directs (focuses) her talents to fiction for young adults, much of her writing focusing on the Cuban-American experience. Her award-winning novels include *Jumping Off to Freedom* (1996), *Fitting In* (1996), and *Loves Me, Loves Me Not* (1998), all published by Arte Público Press. Bernardo spent her adolescent years in Miami and attended Florida State University where she earned a B.A. in Spanish and a Master's degree in Communications. She honed her skills as the Director of Public Information for a large organization, recently starting her own company, Reynold Public Relations[PC1]. She turned to writing books in 1995 and currently lives in Plantation, Florida with her husband and two daughters.

### OTHER YOUNG ADULT NOVELS BY ANILÚ BERNARDO

*Jumping Off to Freedom*  
ISBN 1-55885-088-0, \$9.95  
Ages 11 and up

*Loves Me, Loves Me Not*  
Clothbound  
ISBN 1-55885-258-1, \$16.95  
Paperback  
ISBN 1-55885-259-X, \$9.95  
Ages 11 and up

### CONNECTING WITH THE INTERNET/TECHNOLOGY

To encourage further study and/or research of Cuba and cultural comparisons to the United States, the following web-sites have been selected:

[www.denverpost.com/cuba](http://www.denverpost.com/cuba) (Links to a whole array of Cuban web-sites)

[www.cubaweb.cu](http://www.cubaweb.cu) (Numerous sections of interest, bilingual: fairs and events, e-mail directory, art & culture, etc.)

[www.cubanos.org](http://www.cubanos.org) (Excellent site for information on Cuba)

[www.cubanculture.com](http://www.cubanculture.com) (Culture, foods, etc. on Cuba)

[www.afrocubaweb.com](http://www.afrocubaweb.com) (Good source for learning about tours to Cuba, organizations that sponsor educational and/or cultural excursions like the Center for Cuban Studies)

### ADDITIONAL READING/OTHER BOOKS

I. Nice extension to "Grandma Was Never Young":

Rothburd, Allyson. *Grandparents are Special\**. Olga goes to her grandparents' hair salon every day after school. In school, she and her friends from many different countries are learning to read English. One day she asks her grandmother to read a book to her. She is stunned to find out that her grandmother can't read. Olga decides to teach Grandma to read. They learn together. (\*Geared for ESL readers)

II. Nice extension to "Hurricane Friends":

Snicket, Lemony. *The Wide Window*. (214 pg.) Catastrophes (including a hurricane) and misfortune continue to plague the Baudelaire orphans after they're sent to live with the fearful Aunt Josephine who offers little protection against Count Olaf's treachery.

III. Nice extension to themes on Multi-Culturalism and on Being Different:  
Mora, Pat. *The Rainbow Tulip\**. (32 pg., illus.) Being the only Mexican girl in her class makes Stella or "Estelita" feel like an outcast—she doesn't like feeling different from the rest of the kids. As Stella make her way through the school year, she just might realize that being different can be pretty great. (\*For the younger reader).

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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